

[A Retired Shed Owner]

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Miss Mary Tomasi

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Montpelier, Vt.

A RETIRED SHED ORDER

Joe Palingetti is an unusually large man, big in bone structure and heavy in hard, firm flesh. A twinkle hovered in his brown eyes as he said, "In the old country and when I was small boy they used to call me '[piocolo?] gigante' - that's small giant in our [Fmilian?] dialect."

Joe was clean shaven, well clad from neat tweed suit to shining brown shoes. An immigrant, one of Barre's best liked Italian-American citizens, a successful granite and business men, now retired. He lounged on a wicker settee on the broad porch overlooking a lawn that stretched 75 feet of clipped green to the busy North Main Street. Across the street were a grocery store and beer garden; next door, a furrier establishment; to the right an automobile show room; - but here were shrubs, flowers, lawn, green and quiet. "This would be fine for a business building," Joe admitted. "I've often thought of building, and I've been given some fine offers for selling, but I don't seem to want to let go of it. I like it here. It's near my son's business. I own that business block across the street, my son runs one of the stores. The two upper stories are apartments. It's nice living nearby. I suppose when I'm gone the boy will sell this place. He and his wife and little girl live with us. There's a good iron fence separating our lawn from the street, but he says it's no place for a child to

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play.” Joe smiled. “Guess he forgets he grew up here and played here himself, he and his two sisters. C. 3 VT 2 “When we built this house I planned it after my old home in Parma, but larger and not of natural stone as you see. That's where I was born, in the [Emilian?] country, in Parma, just 55 miles north of Bologna. You've heard of the old Roman road, the Via [Aemillia?], - it runs through our city. Fifty-five miles isn't much of a distance in this country, it isn't in the old country now, but those days we didn't travel much. I never saw Bologna until I was out of school and working. Here the young people think nothing of driving 60 or 70 miles for an evening's dance, they wouldn't think of it over there, although they are beginning to travel more for fun's sake. Automobiles and good roads make a great difference.

“There were five boys and two girls in my family. Two of my brothers have gone to California. I saw them last three years ago when the three of us took a trip to the old country. My father owned a small silk mill in Parma, I couldn't see a future in it for myself. He'd made money, but more up-to-date and larger mills were going up fast. There was too much competition for an old-fashioned mill. When I finished school I had an education equal to that of a sophomore in our American high schools. There's some granite and marble near Parma, I was interested in it, - in the carving. I served a five year apprenticeship there and then came here to Barre. I'd already had a little money saved, I bought a shed with two Italian fellows who'd been working here a few years. They were [Bosi?] and 3 [Molotti?], both countrymen of mine, and both from Parma. They were good carvers. Between the three of us we put out some good statues in those early years.

“I married a Barre widow, that was after I'd been in the granite business about four years. She'd come from the [Piedmont?] section of northern Italy. She had children, two little girls, and owned a grocery store and block that were heavily mortgaged. It was hard taking care of two businesses, and since she dreaded the dangers and sickness that are always facing stonecutters, she urged me to sell my share of the shed and manage her business. I think it was a wise step. With the money from the shed I paid off a good part of the mortgage on her property. We were both thrifty, we built up a good store business.

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When I was well ahead and my son had finished school - he graduated from Norwich,- I let him manage the store. Just a few years ago I got out of the business entirely and turned it over to the boy. He and his wife run the store now.

"My two step-daughters are married. One is living in Virginia, her husband teaches there. The other married an Italian from New Jersey, he's in the insurance business. They're living in Barre. Both girls taught here at Spaulding High School before they married.

"I'm pretty well acquainted with the Italians in Barre. I've noticed that there are certain groups that come from the same locality in Italy. Like myself, for instance. [Bosi?] and [Moletti?] wrote to their friends back home that there 4 was money in the granite business here. That interested me. I wrote to them and when they answered that there were good openings here, well, I came. You'll find a great many here from Turin or the surrounding country, and of course several from the marble districts of Carrara. There's one group that lived in Central Italy, near Rome. Their experience was gathered in the soft stone quarries. This stone is of volcanic origin, and used chiefly in building. The quality of the stone has a great deal to do with the artistic skill of the carver. They did little statue cutting or carving over there, they do little here. The real artists were from the northern country where they worked a harder granite and marble.

"Most of the granite workers try to keep their sons out of the sheds. If they have the money, they prepare them for some profession. Today in Barre - I'm speaking only of Italians now - there are two lawyers and two young doctors whose fathers were in the granite business. Some of the young fellows have to go into the business in spite of themselves. There are few opportunities here for young high school graduates, many of them have to find work in other towns. It's a serious business when such a large percentage of the younger clement pours out of the town year after year."